

Those who are closely associated with me can attest to the fact I have always dissociated myself from the view that 670 Doane Avenue, above the Mexican National program are attributable to Claremont, Calif., or collusion within the U.S. Department of Labor or any of its agencies involved in the administration of the program. Some redolent remarks held this view. I think it is fatuous. I regret that my AFSC memo apparently yielded another H.W. Stewart, Director, California State Department of Employment, 800 Capitol Avenue, Sacramento 14, Calif.

Dear Mr. Stewart:

Sincerely yours,

Thank you for your letter of July 18, in which you raise certain comments and questions concerning a memorandum I sent the American Friends Service Committee two months ago. Although I believe I appreciate your position, I am very much afraid there are misunderstandings at work in this situation, and with your permission I should like to try to set them right at this time.

Prior to the AFSC conference of two months ago, I was approached by representatives of this organization and asked to prepare a critical statement to be used as background at the meeting. It was my understanding that there would be several persons at the meeting prepared to defend the favorable point of view, and that my "assignment" was to take an uncompromisingly gloomy, rather than balanced, stand. It was my understanding, furthermore, that the statement I prepared would be used solely within the context of the aforementioned meeting, where its purpose could not be misconstrued. The AFSC subsequently circulated the memorandum with neither my knowledge nor my consent, and did so without the explanation which, as a very minimum, I would have required before even considering such a procedure. I therefore find myself in the altogether unexpected and altogether unpleasant position of being called upon to defend something I prepared as a piece of private correspondence, and something which, in view of the highly specialized occasion for which it was prepared, does not and could not represent my complete thinking on the subject.

I will not, however, take refuge behind the gaucheries of others. Let me go on to what is the more basic point. From the remarks in your letter, I can only conclude that I gave a misleading impression in the statement I prepared for the AFSC, and failed to make clear the one argument I was trying to set forth. You speak of "charges" and "dereliction of duty." I do not believe any such language will be found in my memorandum. It was decidedly not my intention to call into question the administration or administrators of the Mexican National program. Quite the contrary. I was trying to develop the thought that the program's administrators have been handed an inherently unworkable fait accompli and told to make it work. Only a superman could do it -- and all of us are ordinary mortals. The two specific cases to which you referred were not intended as evidence that an individual clerk in an individual Farm Placement Office was guilty of some mortal sin, but only as evidence that the Farm Placement Service has been assigned a task so vast, so unwieldy, so full of internal contradictions and conflicts, that miscarriages are inevitable. This is not, I think, a particularly startling or original premise. Upon careful examination, I believe you would find that it is shared by a number of persons in the Farm Placement Service itself.

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I am sorry if I have caused your Department embarrassment. It could not be greater than my own.

Sincerely yours,